

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, US, ELAB

SUBJECT: EFL - US LABOR MOVEMENT RELATIONS

REF: CAIRO 11229

1. EMBASSY CORRECTLY NOTED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH SAAD AHMED THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN EFL AND US LABOR MOVEMENT ARE MATTER TO BE WORKED OUT DIRECTLY BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED. US LABOR ORGANIZATION WOULD, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, BE AFL-CIO.

2. EMBASSY SHOULD BE AWARE OF SEVERAL POTENTIAL IMPEDIMENTS TO BILATERAL LABOR RELATIONS, IN DEPARTMENT'S VIEW. DESPITE AHMED'S APPARENT BELIEF THAT AFL-CIO'S CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH HISTADRUT AND THE EFL'S EXCHANGES WITH LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES WOULD POSE NO CONFIDENTIAL

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OBSTACLES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF TIES BETWEEN EFL AND

AFL-CIO, THESE QUESTIONS CANNOT BE IGNORED. PROBLEMS HAVE ARISEN IN THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE AFL-CIO AND TRADE UNIONS IN WESTERN EUROPE OVER THE LATTER'S EXCHANGES WITH LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE, AND IT MUST BE ASSUMED THAT THE EFL'S TIES WITH COMMUNIST LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY CONTINUE IN THE FUTURE, ALSO WILL HAVE A NEGATIVE INFLUENCE INsofar AS RELATIONS WITH THE AFL-CIO ARE CONCERNED.

3. AFL-CIO POLICY OF NOT ENGAGING IN EXCHANGES WITH LABOR ORGANIZATIONS UNDER CONTROL OF GOVERNMENTS IS ANOTHER FACTOR TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. EFL HAS REPUTATION OF BEING CREATURE OF GOVERNMENT, DATING FROM NASSER ERA, TO LIVE DOWN. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS SUCH AS REVISION OF TRADE UNION LAW AND HOLDING OF RELATIVELY FREE ELECTIONS SUGGEST THAT EGYPTIAN LABOR MAY, UNDER THE IMPETUS OF INTERNAL LIBERALIZATION, EVOLVE INTO A SOMEWHAT MORE EQUAL PARTNER IN ITS DOMESTIC DIALOGUE WITH GOVERNMENT AND PARTY. INDICATIONS THAT EFL IS BECOMING MORE GENUINELY DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION, INTENDS TO PLAY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN PROMOTING WORKERS' WELFARE AND, ABOVE ALL, SHOWS PROMISE OF BECOMING REASONABLY INDEPENDENT LABOR ORGANIZATION WOULD ENHANCE PROSPECT FOR BILATERAL LABOR RELATIONS. POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF NEWLY ELECTED EFL LEADERS, THEIR POLICY VIEWS AND POSITION TOWARDS LEFTIST/COMMUNIST ELEMENTS IN LABOR MOVEMENT WOULD ALSO HAVE WEIGHT.

4. EFL'S INITIAL STEPS IN ESTABLISHING DIRECT CONTACTS WITH AFL-CIO SHOULD BE CAREFULLY THOUGHT THROUGH IF THERE IS TO BE ANY CHANCE FOR CLOSER RELATIONS TO DEVELOP. EFL'S INTENT TO SEEK CONTACT WITH SELECTED US UNIONS THROUGH CORRESPONDENCE INDICATES TO US THAT EFL HAS LITTLE APPRECIATION OF NEED TO PREPARE THE GROUND BEFORE SUCH STEPS ARE TAKEN. UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH AFL-CIO WOULD CERTAINLY EXPECT THAT CONTACT WITH EGYPTIAN LABOR ORGANIZATIONS IN THE FIRST INSTANCE WOULD BE A POLICY MATTER FOR THE AFL-CIO. HENCE, IF THERE IS TO BE ANY CHANCE FOR SUCCESS, EFL LEADERS MUST FIRST ESTABLISH SOME COMMUNICATION AND CONTACT WITH AFL-CIO.

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5. EMBASSY MAY WISH TO SUGGEST TO AHMED THAT THIS ENTIRE MATTER BE DISCUSSED WITH THE AFL-CIO'S REPRESENTATIVE IN EUROPE, IRVING BROWN, BEFORE PROCEEDING ANY FURTHER. BROWN, IT MAY BE RECALLED, IS ACQUAINTED WITH AHMED'S PRE-DECESSOR (SALAH GHARIB), AND HAS CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH NORTH AFRICAN LABOR LEADERS. BROWN'S OFFICE IS IN PARIS (ADDRESS: 20, RUE DE LA PAIX, PARIS I; TELEPHONE: 2617471), AND THERE ALSO IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH HIM DURING

ILO MEETINGS (SUCH AS THE NEXT GOVERNING BODY SESSION AT GENEVA IN NOVEMBER) IN WHICH THE EFL PARTICIPATES.

6. WITH RESPECT TO EMBASSY'S INTEREST IN INCLUDING EFL IN

SOME AID PROJECTS, DEPARTMENT RECOGNIZES BOTH POLITICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL MERIT IN LABOR-ORIENTED AID EFFORT IN SELECTED FIELDS. IN-COUNTRY PROJECTS INVOLVING EITHER EFL OR WORKERS' EDUCATION ASSOCIATION WOULD APPEAR APPROPRIATE AS LONG AS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CRITERION IS MET. SIMILARLY, EFL PARTICIPANTS COULD BE INCLUDED IN GROUPS SENT TO THE US FOR DOL SEMINARS OR SIMILAR AID-SPONSORED TRAINING PROGRAMS IN TECHNICAL FIELDS. (IN THIS REGARD, DOL ASSURES US THAT IT COULD PROVIDE ARABIC INTERPRETATION FOR ITS MANPOWER AND LABOR STATISTICS SEMINARS IF A FIELD MISSION WOULD NOMINATE ENOUGH PARTICIPANTS -- 5 OR 6 -- REQUIRING INTERPRETATION AND WOULD SPECIFICALLY REQUEST ARABIC INTERPRETING FACILITIES AT A PARTICULAR SEMINAR). UNTIL AND UNLESS DIRECT BILATERAL RELATIONS ARE DEVELOPED BETWEEN EFL AND AFL-CIO, IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE TO INCLUDE ANY EFL PARTICIPANTS IN AID-SPONSORED LABOR LEADER STUDY SEMINARS OR SIMILAR TRADE UNION PROGRAMS IN THE US IN WHICH THE AFL-CIO IS DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED. KISSINGER

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